



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 22 November 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
22 NOVEMBER 1968

1. Rumania

Rumania appears to be coming under renewed pressure from Moscow to permit early Warsaw Pact military exercises on its soil. The Rumanians themselves have denied this, though they acknowledged that Warsaw Pact staff officers have been meeting in Rumania to plan a "future" exercise. Intensive efforts by the US and NATO intelligence apparatuses have been focused on the matter, producing fragmentary indications of unusual military activity by various Warsaw Pact forces, but nothing like what we would expect to see if major joint exercises--or an outright invasion of Rumania--were imminent. A special Watch Committee meeting of the United States Intelligence Board last night reviewed the evidence then available and concluded that:

--An invasion is unlikely, though the necessary military deployments could be carried out without our observing them.

--A Warsaw Pact exercise with Rumanian participation is equally unlikely, since there have been no preparations by Rumania for such an exercise.

--Warsaw Pact exercises in areas adjacent to Rumania look like the best explanation of what has been seen so far. The purpose of such activity might be to coerce the Rumanians into scheduling a major joint exercise in Rumania in the near future and, possibly, into agreeing to the establishment of a long-term Soviet military presence there.

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2. Czechoslovakia -
Soviet Union

The annual Moscow-Prague trade protocol was signed Wednesday, tightening the checkrein on Czechoslovakia's economic independence. The protocol provides for a ten percent increase in trade between the two countries, making Czechoslovakia more than ever dependent on the Soviet Union for its supply of raw materials and for its marketing of machinery and equipment.

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3. France

Senator Mansfield's call on De Gaulle Tuesday elicited a number of observations on the world situation.

Czechoslovakia: Moscow's main concern is not Czechoslovakia; it is China. Soviet actions in East Europe are designed to strengthen their own defenses against an eventual threat from China.

The Mediterranean: The Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean is not a serious problem; nevertheless, the US Sixth Fleet should be maintained at its present strength.

Germany: "Never, never will Russia permit the reunification of Germany."

The next US administration: To Mansfield's suggestion that a Nixon-De Gaulle meeting in Paris next spring would be a good thing, "Yes, it is essential for our two nations to remain close together. There are many things to discuss."

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4. South Vietnam

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5. Panama

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6. Nigeria

Civilian officials in Lagos are pressing the military leaders to request immediate delivery of all types of Soviet war materiel in order to push the war against Biafra to a quick conclusion. The Federal government has already accepted considerable amounts of Soviet equipment, including some 25 MIGs. It still prefers to rely on British and other Western sources for the bulk of its armament. Delays in British arms shipments are being blamed for the Nigerians' failure to overwhelm Biafran resistance, however, and there are fears that if the war is not ended soon, the French may intervene in Biafra's behalf. A massive injection of Soviet firepower could make a big difference to the stalled Federal offensive.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes



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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

More on Le Duc Tho: Hanoi's chief negotiator in the Paris talks has had unusually long discussions in both Peking and Moscow en route back to France. Le Duc Tho's stopover in Peking seems to have included a full day's discussion with top Chinese leaders.

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moved on to Moscow on 17 November and presumably is still there. There have been no announcements so far about his activities in the USSR.

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The length of Tho's stay in Moscow suggests that Hanoi is counting heavily on strong Soviet backing during the next phase of negotiations. The Soviets may also be counseling the Vietnamese on some matters, such as how to evaluate the Nixon election victory. Soviet - North Vietnamese relations have been cordial throughout the negotiations, but Hanoi still prefers to keep Moscow at arm's length. They are not, for example, attending the current Communist conference in Budapest despite Soviet desires to have the fullest possible participation from ruling parties.

In both Moscow and Peking, Le Duc Tho probably has been trying to obtain maximum support from Communist countries and Communist front groups for the new North Vietnamese negotiations priorities worked out in Hanoi during the past month. Now that the bombing has stopped, the Communists are reorienting their propaganda guidelines to support their new negotiating stance. If past actions are any guide, the Vietnamese Communists probably will single out one major objective--such as withdrawal of US forces--from their total package of demands and hammer on it until they obtain the last possible allied concession. In this kind of campaign, they count heavily on international support to sustain pressure on Washington.

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Communist Maneuvering: Communist actions both on the battlefield and in the political arena suggest that Hanoi is somewhat uncertain of the proper tactics for the present fluid situation. The Communists appear to believe that the best course is to wait out developments on the allied side before taking any significant new initiatives.

On the one hand, the Communists are conducting limited military actions in the South, such as shellings of population centers, which could be calculated to make it more difficult for Saigon to move to Paris. On the other hand, however, they are not conducting any significant military activities in the Demilitarized Zone. Nor have they really made the kind of propaganda hay out of the Paris stalemate, reconnaissance, or US actions in the DMZ which they might if their primary aim was to stall the opening of talks.

North Vietnam may be preparing to make a greater issue of US military action in the DMZ area, however. A North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry spokesman issued a statement on 21 November which "sternly condemned" the US for "wantonly shelling" three villages in the northern half of the DMZ from positions inside the southern half of the zone. The statement said this occurred on 16, 17, 20 and 21 November and was accompanied by US naval gunfire. In the toughest language Hanoi has used to date on this subject, it said the alleged shellings were "extremely brazen provocative acts...which grossly encroached upon the sovereignty and security" of North Vietnam.

Intercepted messages suggest the North Vietnamese are collecting data to back up such charges, perhaps on a regular basis. On 20 November an unidentified North Vietnamese artillery regiment in the DMZ area ordered a subordinate to report daily on allied artillery fire from south of the Ben Hai River. The subordinate was also told to report the number of times and the number of rounds the allies had fired from south of the river for the period 14 through 18 November. Elements of another Northern regiment reported on 18 November that a South Vietnamese regiment was in the eastern DMZ.

Military Developments: Communications intercepts from infiltration-related elements within North Vietnam continue to provide an inconclusive picture of the activity in the manpower pipeline. The limited evidence available, however, fails to show any large-scale movement of troops toward South Vietnam since the suspension of bombing north of the Demilitarized Zone on 1 November.

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There is persuasive evidence [] that the movement of casualties could be the first order of business in the infiltration system at this time. A message intercepted on 16 November has provided the first positive indication that the term "students"--

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which has been repeatedly noted in Rear Services communications in the past--is a cover term for sick and wounded personnel. When these references are combined with the reports which openly discuss casualty movements, the total number of disabled men being moved from the South is revealed to be substantial.

In recent days intercepted messages referring to the evacuation of large groups of disabled troops have become even more striking. On 8 November a commo-liaison station reported that it had received 315 sick and wounded personnel, dispatched 113, and was retaining 202 others. On the same date it was reported that 2,500 "students" were awaiting transport at three Rear Services stations within North Vietnam. On 16 November an unidentified station reported that between 1 and 15 November it had received 1,435 "students," 730 of whom were wounded and 705 sick.

The degree of duplication involved in the intercepts received from various points in the pipeline, as the sick and wounded move north, is presently unknown. It may be high. The incomplete nature of many of the intercepts precludes a knowledge of the time frame in which the numbers of disabled personnel are being counted. Moreover, increased collection assets focused on the Rear Services system in recent months may be providing a fuller view of an evacuation procedure which could have been operating for many years. Nevertheless, the evidence strongly suggests that a major effort to move out the wounded is now under way and that this project is a chief concern of the infiltration system at this time.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

There is nothing of significance to report today.

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